

**Roanoke County**  
Interstate 81 PPTA Improvement Project  
Detailed Proposal Review Comments for Proposal by

**STAR Solutions**

1. Are the proposed improvements compatible with any local comprehensive plans that exist for your locality?
  - YES, to the extent that a well-designed, built, and maintained transportation infrastructure improves safety and supports economic development.
    - A. The County of Roanoke's 1998 Community Plan includes the following items relative to the proposal:
      - i. Pursue increased State and Federal support for all types of transportation improvements. Examine modifications to the funding formulas that will bring more funds into the western portion of the Salem Transportation District.
      - ii. Monitor and correct safety problems associated with existing transportation facilities and services.
      - iii. Develop and implement a responsible financial plan that identifies existing and new funding mechanisms, including private funding initiatives, to achieve the County's transportation system objectives (*We are not implying that this proposal includes a more responsible financial plan, but does include private funding initiatives to achieve its goal.*).
      - iv. Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) is the use of high technology to solve transportation problems. VDOT will be developing further applications of ITS that will enhance the quality of life and promote state-wide economic development.
      - v. Upgrade existing roadways to correct unsafe conditions.
      - vi. Identify potential public-private partnerships that will enhance economic development in Roanoke County (*the I-81 Corridor has been identified by Roanoke County as an economic opportunity area*).
  - NO
    - A. The proposal fails to sufficiently improve rail transportation (or at least fails to provide the detail that would indicate otherwise). The County of Roanoke's 1998 Community Plan includes the following items relative to rail systems:
      - i. Work towards a more balanced transportation system – one that is multimodal.

B. Property impacts along I-81 Corridor.

- i. May lose potential Core area (commercial property, as designated on County's Future Land Use Map), specifically near Dixie Caverns area.
- ii. Not necessarily an impact, but most of I-81 goes through Neighborhood Conservation, Development, and Rural Preserve areas (as designated on County's Future Land Use Map).
- iii. County has performed a study on the Corridor and found that any widening or right-of-way acquisition could create non-conforming parcels.
- iv. This particular proposal seems to have more impacts on the aforementioned properties due to increased widening and interchange improvements.

C. Impacts to the environment are unknown at this time. The County of Roanoke's 1998 Community Plan includes the following items relative to the environment:

- i. Scenic Viewsheds: One of the policies of the Community Plan is to protect scenic viewsheds, mountain sides, and ridgetops within the County.

2. Does this proposal, on its own merits, warrant consideration by VDOT's Commissioner for negotiation of a comprehensive agreement?

- YES, VDOT does not have the financial resources to make the needed improvements along I-81 in a timely manner. That is why a public-private partnership warrants consideration. However, the County supports further pursuance of government funding for this project, rather than a predominant reliance on the toll revenues. Furthermore, action must be taken to improve safety and enhance mobility along the I-81 corridor.

3. Are there portions of this proposal that create specific advantages and/or benefits for your locality?

- Mobility and safety improved along I-81.
- Jobs created due to construction.
- Addresses long range capacity issues; would not have to come back in 10-15 years to widen again.
- Financial plan currently permitted by law in Virginia.

4. Are there portions of this proposal that create specific disadvantages and/or drawbacks for your locality?

- Potential traffic impacts on secondary roads and intersections such as Rte. 311, Kessler Mill Rd., Plantation Rd., Williamson Rd., and Rte. 11/460, to name a few.
- Stormwater management/flooding issues; more impervious area would necessitate the need for more stormwater basins along the Corridor.
- Potential business displacement and subsequent loss of tax revenue for the County.
- Large truck plazas could be detrimental to regional air quality.
- The potential impact on viewshed is significant.
- Truck only tolls may unfairly impact select users, businesses and industries.
- Later construction completion date than other proposal.

5. Are there any other comments you wish VDOT to consider?

- VDOT, under STAR's proposal, will still be responsible for a portion of the maintenance along I-81. Will the funding be available?
- The environmental impact is unknown at this time.
- Roanoke County maintains (as stated in comments pertinent to I-81 submitted to VDOT in recent years) that we desire any right-of-way acquisition for widening or interchanges to have as minimal adverse impacts as possible (i.e., inside widening where possible, feasibly keep footprint of proposed I-81 within existing right-of-way).
- The Board of Supervisors passed a resolution on June 24, 2003, resolving that they support the development and promotion of rail freight and passenger service parallel to I-81, to complement limited highway-widening and to move a large volume of the long distance freight traffic from trucks on I-81 to freight trains on dual track, high speed rails parallel to I-81. This proposal does not adequately address rail freight potential in the whole I-81 Corridor.
- The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (VDRPT) is currently studying the potential for freight rail diversion. This study is not complete, as far as we know. We withhold further comment on the rail diversion plan until report findings are studied.
- Roanoke County wants to cooperate with VDOT and/or the consultant on the following issues: stormwater management (regional basins), utility crossings, frontage roads, public safety during construction, sound barriers, and interchange designs for economic development purposes (for example, Exit 132, interchange for County's Center for Research and Technology. Must provide truck access to property.)
- A limitation on the State's liability must be established and whatever financial liability is placed upon the State should not restrict or limit the State's abilities to fund other transportation improvements.

- We would like an explanation of STAR's "non-compete covenant" (pg. T-3, and/or pg. 188 of 197). Does this affect any type of major rail improvement initiative that VDOT would desire to undertake?
- We have concern over the consultant's motivation, or lack thereof, to participate in major rail improvements for the entire I-81 Corridor. Why would they encourage an alternative mode of transportation that would drastically cut into the very revenues (tolls on trucks) that they depend on to fund their project?

**Roanoke County**  
Interstate 81 PPTA Improvement Project  
Detailed Proposal Review Comments for Proposal by

**FLUOR Virginia, Inc.**

1. Are the proposed improvements compatible with any local comprehensive plans that exist for your locality?
  - YES, to the extent that a well-designed, built, and maintained transportation infrastructure improves safety and supports economic development.
    - A. The County of Roanoke's 1998 Community Plan includes the following items relative to the proposal:
      - i. Pursue increased State and Federal support for all types of transportation improvements. Examine modifications to the funding formulas that will bring more funds into the western portion of the Salem Transportation District.
      - ii. Monitor and correct safety problems associated with existing transportation facilities and services.
      - iii. Develop and implement a responsible financial plan that identifies existing and new funding mechanisms, including private funding initiatives, to achieve the County's transportation system objectives (*We are not implying that this proposal includes a more responsible financial plan, but does include private funding initiatives to achieve its goal.*).
      - iv. Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) is the use of high technology to solve transportation problems. VDOT will be developing further applications of ITS that will enhance the quality of life and promote state-wide economic development.
      - v. Upgrade existing roadways to correct unsafe conditions.
      - vi. Identify potential public-private partnerships that will enhance economic development in Roanoke County (*the I-81 Corridor has been identified by Roanoke County as an economic opportunity area*).
  - NO
    - A. The proposal fails to sufficiently improve rail transportation (or at least fails to provide the detail that would indicate otherwise). The County of Roanoke's 1998 Community Plan includes the following items relative to rail systems:
      - i. Work towards a more balanced transportation system – one that is multimodal. (FLUOR's proposal states "*While FLUOR's proposed near term improvements will alleviate a significant infrastructure bottleneck with Norfolk Southern's rail network, the ability to increase intermodal traffic is also dependent upon factors outside*

*the scope of the proposed near term improvements.” – FLUOR Virginia, Inc.)*

- B. Property impacts along I-81 Corridor.
  - i. May lose potential Core area (commercial property, as designated on County’s Future Land Use Map), specifically near Dixie Caverns area.
  - ii. Not necessarily an impact, but most of I-81 goes through Neighborhood Conservation, Development, and Rural Preserve areas (as designated on County’s Future Land Use Map).
  - iii. County has performed a study on the Corridor and found that any widening or right-of-way acquisition could create non-conforming parcels.
- C. Impacts to the environment are unknown at this time. The County of Roanoke’s 1998 Community Plan includes the following items relative to the environment:
  - i. Scenic Viewsheds: One of the policies of the Community Plan is to protect scenic viewsheds, mountain sides, and ridgetops within the County.

- 2. Does this proposal, on its own merits, warrant consideration by VDOT’s Commissioner for negotiation of a comprehensive agreement?
  - YES, VDOT does not have the financial resources to make the needed improvements along I-81 in a timely manner. That is why a public-private partnership warrants consideration. However, the County supports further pursuance of government funding for this project, rather than a predominant reliance on the toll revenues. Furthermore, action must be taken to improve safety and enhance mobility along the I-81 corridor.
- 3. Are there portions of this proposal that create specific advantages and/or benefits for your locality?
  - Proposed electrified truck parking locations could enhance air quality. Roanoke County is currently working with area MPO on air quality issues. FLUOR recognizes the possibility of Roanoke County being designated a non-attainment area.
  - Mobility and safety improved along I-81.
  - Jobs created due to construction.
  - This proposal does not require the use of State and Federal funds.
  - Earlier construction completion date than other proposal.

4. Are there portions of this proposal that create specific disadvantages and/or drawbacks for your locality?

- Potential traffic impacts on secondary roads and intersections such as Rte. 311, Kessler Mill Rd., Plantation Rd., Williamson Rd., and Rte. 11/460, to name a few. (FLUOR admits, *“The introduction of tolls will potentially cause diversion of traffic to untolled roads, because drivers will attempt to escape the payment of tolls. Such diversion could increase traffic volume on other roads, with attendant adverse effects on traffic patterns, property access, and community cohesion.”* – FLUOR Virginia, Inc.)
- Stormwater management/flooding issues; more impervious area would necessitate the need for more stormwater basins along the Corridor.
- Potential business displacement and subsequent loss of tax revenue for the County.
- All users of I-81 would be required to pay tolls for use of roadway.
- Current financial plan (i.e. tolling passenger cars) not permitted by law in Virginia.

5. Are there any other comments you wish VDOT to consider?

- VDOT, under FLUOR’s proposal, will still be responsible for maintenance along I-81. There would be more roadway and infrastructure to maintain, and VDOT would have to increase I-81 maintenance funds. Is this likely?
- The environmental impact is unknown at this time.
- Roanoke County maintains (as stated in comments pertinent to I-81 submitted to VDOT in recent years) that we desire any right-of-way acquisition for widening or interchanges to have as minimal adverse impacts as possible (i.e., inside widening where possible, feasibly keep footprint of proposed I-81 within existing right-of-way).
- The Board of Supervisors passed a resolution on June 24, 2003, resolving that they support the development and promotion of rail freight and passenger service parallel to I-81, to complement limited highway widening and to move a large volume of the long distance freight traffic from trucks on I-81 to freight trains on dual tracks, high speed rails parallel to I-81. This proposal does not adequately address rail freight potential in the whole I-81 Corridor.
- The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (VDRPT) is currently studying the potential for freight rail diversion. This study is not complete, as far as we know. We withhold further comment on the rail diversion plan until report findings are studied.
- Roanoke County wants to cooperate with VDOT and/or the consultant on the following issues: stormwater management (regional basins), utility crossings, frontage roads, public safety during construction, sound barriers, and interchange designs for economic development purposes (for example, Exit 132, interchange

for County's Center for Research and Technology. Must provide truck access to property.)

- A limitation on the State's liability must be established and whatever financial liability is placed upon the State should not restrict or limit the State's abilities to fund other transportation improvements.
- We have concern over the consultant's motivation, or lack thereof, to participate in major rail improvements for the entire I-81 Corridor. Why would they encourage an alternative mode of transportation that would drastically cut into the very revenues (tolls on trucks) that they depend on to fund their project?